

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

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TO : ARA - Mr. John H. Crimmins

FROM : ARA/BR - Stephen Low

SUBJECT: General Malan's Speech

DATE: January 14, 1972

Attached are three messages received from Brasilia on the subject of General Malan's speech in case you had not already seen them. They seem to agree in the judgment that the speech should not be interpreted as indicating an impending democratic opening in Brazil.

Some of the explanations for the speech seem a little farfetched to me. I think it is fair to assume that Malan knew what he was saying. He was probably surprised, however, at the notice taken of what he considered to be a foregone conclusion on which everyone had long ago agreed; that is, that the military had no intention of remaining indefinitely in political control and would continue to plan to turn over control to the civilians at an appropriate time in the future, which he hoped would not be unduly delayed.

Attachments:

Braşilia 2026

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Declassified Authority: 44281 By:
Laurie Madsen Date: 04-14-2015

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CONTROLLED DISENGAGEMENT OF THE ARMED FORCES. ALTHOUGH THIS A POLITICAL DECISION, TIMING OF WHICH IS DUTY OF GOVERNMENT TO DETERMINE, WE MUST PREPARE OURSELVES FOR IT BY FOLLOWING THE ROAD OF PROFESSIONALISM..."

3. SPEECH RECEIVED WIDE MEDIA COVERAGE. ESPECIALLY PLAYED WAS IDEA TO EFFECT THAT THE GENERAL WAS URGING THE MILITARY TO GO BACK TO THE BARRACKS. SPEECH ALSO GAVE RISE TO PUBLIC PRONOUNCEMENTS BY MANY POLITICIANS OF BOTH PARTIES THAT "DEMOCRATIC REOPENING" WAS IMMINENT. ACCORDING CAS SOURCES, PRESIDENT MEDICI QUITE PERTURBED AT SPEECH. ARMY MINISTER ORLANDO GEISEL WAS CALLED ON CARPET AS RESULT; HOWEVER, APPARENTLY SINCE SPEECHES ON THESE OCCASIONS NORMALLY ROUTINE, THIS SPEECH WAS NOT CLEARED IN ADVANCE.

4. DAO INFORMED THAT SPEECH HAD BEEN DRAFTED IN ADVANCE BY TWO COLONELS ON GENERAL MALAN'S STAFF AND THAT GENERAL HAD NOT HAD TIME TO READ CONTENTS PRIOR TO DELIVERY. ON THE OTHER HAND, EMBOFF TOLD IN CONFIDENCE BY GENERAL MALAN'S STAFF AIDE THAT GENERAL HAD INTENDED SPEECH TO WARN HIS FELLOW FLAG RANK OFFICERS NOT TO NURTURE PERSONAL POLITICAL AMBITIONS IN ANTICIPATION OF PRESIDENTIAL SUCCESSION QUESTION. AIDE ADDED THAT POLITICIANS DELIBERATELY HAD FOCUSED PUBLICLY ON IDEA OF MILITARY WITHDRAWAL DUE TO THE FORMER'S OWN SELF INTERESTS AND DESIRE TO RETURN TO POWER.

5. WHATEVER THE TRUE STORY IS BEHIND GENERAL MALAN'S SPEECH, OVERALL RESULT SEEMS TO BE TEMPEST IN A TEAPOT. MANY POLITICANS, AS THEY HAVE ON OCCASION IN THE PAST, SEIZED UPON FORTUITOUS MOMENT TO RAISE ANEW TOPIC OF "DEMOCRATIC REOPENING". HOWEVER, PUBLIC COMMENT IS QUICKLY DYING DOWN AT REALIZATION THAT SPEECH WAS NOT SIGNAL THAT MEDICI GOVERNMENT PREPARED AT THIS MOMENT TO MAKE ANY ABRUPT CHANGES.

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Army Chief of Staff's Speech Causes Stir

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In a recent speech to a group of newly promoted generals, the Army Chief of Staff created a public stir by stating that the time was in sight when a group of civilians could take over the governing of the country and permit the military to return to their constitutional profession of soldiering. The general ideas expressed by the General have been voiced before by GOB officials, but the precision of his words, the inopportune timing of his remarks, and the subsequent widespread publicity reportedly angered President Medici. The exact explanation behind the General's speech is not entirely clear. Nevertheless, it appears that the entire incident will have little future significant repercussions.

SPEECH BEFORE INCOMING GENERALS

On December 14, before an audience including Army Minister Orlando GEISEL and other dignitaries, Army Chief of Staff General Alfredo SOUTO MALAN delivered an address during a ceremony inducting six newly promoted career officers into the ranks of the general officer corps. As is frequently the case in these addresses, the Army Chief of Staff devoted much

Enclosure:

Informal Translation of General Malan's Speech

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of his speech to lauding the devotion of the armed forces to their country and to justifying the military intervention in the nation's political process which brought about the 1964 Revolution. In his final thoughts, however, the General explicitly expressed the idea that the time was in sight when a competent cadre of civilians could relieve the military of their civil duties and permit the latter to return to their primary responsibility---that of soldiering. Thus, he concluded, "We can allow ourselves to look for a process of controlled disengagement of the Armed Forces. Although that is a political decision, the timing of which is the duty of the government to determine, we must prepare ourselves for it by following the road of professionalism, without failing to recognize the impositions caused by the exceptional phase which the country is undergoing."

Public Reaction

The speech received widespread media coverage, and many newspapers carried prominent headlines to the effect that General Malan was urging the troops to return to the barracks. The media also tied the speech to President Medici's visit to Washington which was described as having a liberalizing effect on the present political system. The political class, as it has several times in the past, also jumped at the occasion to interpret the General's words as a clear signal that the Medici Administration was prepared to return to a more open political system. MDB spokesmen in particular, pointing to the presence of Minister Geisel at the ceremony, applauded the speech and stressed that it was the official pronouncement of a reversion from military to civilian rule. Many ARENA politicians also were quick to endorse the speech in this same vein, although the ARENA top leadership was noteworthy for its silence on the subject in the absence of specific guidance from the executive.

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Reportedly, Army Minister Geisel was called on the carpet for allowing the speech. However, since the Minister had not authorized the speech but had simply been a member of the audience in attendance, there were no further consequences.

Some military officers privately expressed surprise that the speech had caused such a furor. They pointed out that it has always been the intent of the military eventually to withdraw from governing the country when the "time is right", and that this philosophy had been publicly cited on numerous occasions. Other officers were highly critical of the Chief of Staff and dismissed the text of the speech as both inappropriate and insignificant.

Several Possible Explanations

The Defense Attache has been informed by usually reliable sources that the speech had been written in the General's absence by two officers on his staff, and that he did not have an opportunity to review the text prior to its delivery. According to these sources, the General, himself, was caught by surprise upon reading cold the prepared speech, although he was later reported to have taken full responsibility for what was said.

In a different explanation, a personal aide to the Army Chief of Staff confided to the reporting officer that the General's real intention in delivering his address had been to warn the new generals, as well as more senior army flag officers, against personal political ambitions in the coming years. With General Malan scheduled for retirement soon, his assistant stressed the General was reflecting his real concern that ambitious generals vying to boost their candidacy as President Medici's successor might undermine the equilibrium of military solidarity. What General Malan sought to convey, he stressed, was that the military leaders were to serve when called upon to do so, but they should not actually seek power on their own. The idea that the military would eventually rescind control was not new, has been occasionally enunciated by various government officials, and more recently had been expressed by General Geisel, himself, during a speech on Soldier's Day. The aide further commented that the media and politicians had deliberately seized upon the speech to use it to their own ends of pressing for the alteration of the present political system.

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COMMENT

The total immediate effect of General Malan's speech would seem to be that of a tempest in a teapot. The press and the politicians seized upon a fortuitous opportunity, as they have several times in the past, to raise the issue of a "democratic reopening" and proceed to keep it alive as long as possible. The response from the executive, again as in the past, has been deafening public silence, thus scuttling the idea at least for another period.

If it was, indeed, General Malan's intent to warn military officers against political ambition, the situation is one to which the President may well wish to pay close attention. To date, one of the key ingredients of President Medici's success has been his ability to maintain the solidarity of his base, the military. Should divisive cracks rend the fabric too deeply, it might well lead to the type of political crisis which would have dire consequences in all fields. During the next two years, therefore, one of the President's chief preoccupations will undoubtedly be how to balance factionalism within the military which has remained basically latent to date.

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INFORMAL TRANSLATION OF SPEECH BY GENERAL MALAN
DELIVERED DECEMBER 14, 1971

This ceremony presided over by the Minister (of the Army), General Orlando Geisel, includes among its formalities a greeting from the Army Chief of Staff to those who today receive the general's sword in the Brazilian Army. It is a duty which I once again fulfill, honored to have among my listeners distinguished officers and comrades of the Army and the other Armed Forces, illustrious guests, and representatives of the young men of the Military Academy of Agulhas Negras.

I wish to express the satisfaction of the Army and to share with you and your worthy families the joy of this promotion. In saluting you, Brigadier Generals, from the wide spectrum of your responsibilities, I have chosen to address a question whose importance and relevance I wish to emphasize.

What motives and principles ought to underlie the thinking and action of the military leader in our present day? This is a question to be answered not just in response to the very particular situation of one moment in our history, but, principally, in the course of a search for a future for which we must prepare.

Since March 1964, the participation of the Armed Forces in our national life has grown to an unprecedented degree. The causes of the revolutionary dynamism which brought the military to such a profound and extensive intervention are already recorded in history. It begins with the break from the recent past when the attempt was made to neutralize the Armed Forces, reducing them to the role of submissive spectators of a political process which the government at that time and its subversive cronies were directing for their own interests.

With the first Institutional Acts it expanded and at the same time limited itself. Subsequently, it regained drive, it established a purpose, and strengthened itself before the onrush of two dominant necessities: to avoid a return to the past and to prepare the bases for the construction of a new Brazil. The awareness of the transitory nature of this intervention is constantly revealed in the words and acts of the three governments of the Brazilian Revolution.

The elevation of military leaders to the Presidency, through an exceptional process, raises to a higher level the

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responsibilities that the Armed Forces have assumed. Having received the confidence of the Brazilian people, each of the three presidents knew how to govern as an authentic interpreter of their will and aims. Each of them shared with the Armed Forces the high sense of mission with which the soldier performs his duty.

In the years which followed 1964, internal security was predominant among the concerns of the military. From the beginning the military had the task, as thankless as it was necessary, of locating, neutralizing, and punishing undesirable elements, and of cooperating in the cleaning up of the rubbish of subversion, incompetence, and corruption. On a par with this was antiguerrilla training soon put to the test in operations; the setting up and operation of an intelligence system; the vigilance and fight against the subversives in which so many Brazilians were sacrificed, some in the unswerving and heroic fulfillment of their duty; others because of deceit and obsession with twisted ideas. In this fight, many activities of a predominantly police character had to be assumed by the military and continue to be performed by them. Nevertheless, the excellent relations between the people and the government have given to the nation a degree of internal cohesion that has continually frustrated the efforts of subversives to gain popular support. Also, the civil security agencies, restructured and equipped, increasingly are becoming the first line of defense against the attacks of the international Communist movement. The Army, with the other Armed Forces, spreading its presence throughout Brazil by permanent installations or by its mobility will strengthen its role of discouraging or annihilating possible armed attack on public order, on institutions and on the national sovereignty.

In leftist mythology, the stereotype of the military is that of defender of privileges and of an obstacle to social progress. In reality, the participation of the Brazilian Armed Forces in the process of the modernization and transformation of the Nation is undeniable. They are a cross-section of the population whose aims and aspirations they historically reflect. Thus, the disappointment of those who cultivate such a myth can easily be understood as they find out that the most profound changes that Brazil has yet attempted have originated with the three presidents who have come from the Armed Forces, and who avail themselves of the Armed Forces to press forward with the work of revolutionary building program. The results of this program in the field of economic development, of social

and national integration, of administrative modernization, in short, in the confidence of the Brazilian people in its destinies as a great Nation are too evident to need further comment. All know, in the particular case of the Army, how much devotion, energy, and resources the fulfillment of these additional duties beyond our Constitutional mission have cost us. We carry out our tasks convinced of the necessity of joining our efforts to those of civilians in seeking better days for Brazil. And we see that the moment is within sight in which the existence of groups of civilian personnel sufficiently large, diverse, and capable, will allow the military to concentrate on exercising a profession in which no one can replace them: that of the soldier.

We can, then, allow ourselves to look for a process which could be called the controlled disengagement of the Armed Forces. If that is a political decision, the timing of which it is the duty of the government to determine, we must prepare for it by following the road of professionalism without failing to recognize the impositions caused by the exceptional phase which the country is undergoing. It is exactly that road which was pointed out by the Minister in the speech in which he responded to the greeting of the Navy and Air Force, on the Day of the Soldier: "With each day that passes, we can more readily return to our professional duties, in pace with a security that increases in measure with the value of what must be protected." The program of restructuring and re-equipping the Army, already approved in its first phase and actually in process, will give us the necessary instruments which promote security and which tend to favor the disengagement to which we referred. To close, the certainty of the stability of the Brazilian model of democratic institutions will be manifested in the final and enduring establishment of the revolutionary process begun on March 31, 1964.

This is how, newly appointed Generals, I can answer the question with which I began this speech with the purpose of contributing to your thinking and action as military leaders. You distinguished gentlemen have arrived at a position of high command in the Army at a time particularly promising in the life of the Nation and of the Army. And great is the responsibility of one who must be at the head of an Army which wishes to be modern, trained, equipped, an instrument of security for a new Brazil--democratic, strong, and free--which the Revolution of March 31 has laboriously and securely constructed. The Army Chief of Staff hopes that you will understand and fulfill your responsibility with distinction.

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